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Ministry of Forests and Range

ABORIGINAL FORESTRY PROGRAM RECEIVES $125,000

VICTORIA – Forests and Range Minister Rich Coleman announced today that the Province is granting $125,000 to the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology's Forest Technician Training Program to help increase the number of skilled Aboriginal people working in B.C.'s forest sector.

"Since 2002, the Province has reached forestry agreements with 127 First Nations, giving access to 24.4 million cubic metres of timber," said Coleman. "Investing in the Forest Technician Training Program is one way to ensure these communities gain the skills and expertise to get the most out of their tenures."

The 12-month technician training program prepares students to work in the forest industry, while incorporating Aboriginal cultural values and sensitivity to environmental issues. Upon graduation, students receive a Natural Resource Technician Certificate, which often serves as a stepping stone to a Diploma of Technology, undergraduate forestry degrees and long-term employment.

The program also strives to build partnerships between government, industry and Aboriginal communities. After eight months of classroom training, students apply their knowledge by working with mentors at a sponsor company or forest district office.

"Developing these partnerships is a major focus of the program," said Paul Willms, head of NVIT's Natural Resource Technology Department. "Our success depends on fostering understanding between Aboriginal communities and local companies, creating long-lasting relationships that produce economic opportunities and advancing Aboriginal participation in managing B.C.'s forest lands."

More than 100 Aboriginal students have completed the Forest Technician Training Program since it was launched in 1997.

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Media contact:
Jennifer McLarty
Public Affairs Officer
Ministry of Forests and Range
250 387-4592

Paul Willms
Head, Natural Resource Technology Department
Nicola Valley Institute of Technology
250 378-3327

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